

8/6/93

SUBJ: National Tuition Assistance Program

1. PURPOSE. This order establishes program responsibility, eligibility, and the recommended funding approach for the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) National Tuition Assistance Program (NTAP).

2. DISTRIBUTION. This order is distributed to all managers and supervisors.

3. GUIDELINES.

a. The intent of the FAA is to encourage employees to develop their potential through education. A cornerstone of this approach is the belief that a well educated work force best serves the agency's mission. The agency will have capable employees to meet and respond to changing work requirements when the employees themselves have expectations of life-long learning and take the ultimate responsibility for their own personal and professional development.

b. The FAA believes education and training are appropriate when the agency can expect to gain more benefit from the education than it invests in cost. This value determination must rely on the vision and judgment of line managers and supervisors. They provide operational approval of educational experiences which build skills and knowledge levels and better enable employees to contribute to the FAA mission. In some cases, the need is immediate and the education/training is remedial; in others, the aim is to update and maintain professional knowledge; and in still others, the goal is to prepare for anticipated agency requirements.

c. The NTAP encourages employees in pursuing their life-long learning efforts. It is a partnership between the agency and its employees. This partnership calls for the FAA to place a priority on available funding for reimbursement of educational expenses for employees who meet the criteria of the program. The employees contribute by taking courses during non-duty hours at accredited institutions of higher learning.

d. The intent of the agency is to provide managers and supervisors with:

(1) flexibility in meeting their operational requirements, and

(2) options in meeting the educational and developmental needs of their employees.

In support of this program certain employee benefits related to educational costs, adjusted work schedules, and/or leave will be considered on an individual basis. The amount of assistance may vary greatly depending upon organizational demands and availability of funds. To allow maximum program flexibility, the final administrative approval rests with the headquarters (AHR-20), regional, or center Training Program Management Officer (TPMO).

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

a. Assistant Administrator for Human Resource Management. Provides leadership and allocates resources to fulfill the Agency's commitment to the continuing development of an educated and trained work force.

b. Office of Training and Higher Education.

(1) Provides program oversight and serves as the principal advocate and focal point for the NTAP.

(2) Develops recommendations and baseline data to track and evaluate program impact.

c. Office of Human Resource Development.

(1) Provides coordination and support to The Director, Office of Training and Higher Education on the agency's future work force needs.

(2) Ensures an appropriate emphasis on management and general skill development within the agency's work force.

d. Human Resource Management Division.

(1) Provides headquarters/regional/center oversight to ensure equity in program management.

(2) Establishes direction based on the unique requirements of the regional work force.

e. Headquarters Office/Service and Region/Center Divisions.

- (1) Identifies unique work force requirements in anticipation of program need.
- (2) Ensures program awareness and management support to all levels of the organization.
- (3) Identifies job-related and/or career development training for employees in support of organizational goals.

f. Training Program Management Officer.

- (1) Provides leadership and manages the headquarters/regional/center NTAP.
- (2) Plans and develops funding requirements based upon foreseeable needs.
- (3) Develops headquarters/regional/center program, standards, procedures, and guidance for the implementation of the NTAP to conform with national criteria.
- (4) Provides administrative approval for the appropriateness of the requested courses and the availability of funds.
- (5) Determines cost effectiveness and the maximum reimbursement for similar courses offered by private or public institutions of higher learning.
- (6) Evaluates program effectiveness in conjunction with the Office of Training and Higher Education.
- (7) Serves as the primary point of contact and agency representative for local institutions of higher learning.

g. Supervisor/Manager.

- (1) Identifies and balances organizational needs with employee educational/developmental needs.
- (2) Anticipates future mission demands and prepares employees to meet the demands of the changing work environment.
- (3) Provides encouragement and guidance to employees engaged in self-development.

h. Employee.

(1) Engages in self-assessment activities.

(2) Initiates a self-development career plan, e.g., individual development plan (IDP), outlining the targeted acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for the maintenance and expansion of current and future organizational needs and effectiveness.

(3) Coordinates self-development plan with first-line supervisor.

5. PROGRAM CRITERIA. Headquarters (AHR-120), regions and centers will develop implementing procedures for the National Tuition Assistance Program (NTAP) that meet the following minimum criteria:

a. The program will be open to all permanent employees with at least one year of continuous Government service. The agency places a special emphasis on those employees who are working toward an initial degree or certification and are increasing their professional knowledge and skill level in their current career field.

b. An independent process shall clearly define the criteria used to evaluate employee requests for tuition assistance and the priority process for allocating funds.

c. Information relative to the program and the application procedures will receive wide distribution.

6. PROCEDURES. Requests under the NTAP for employees to attend accredited institutions of higher learning will be subject to the following conditions (except as noted under paragraph 7, EXCEPTIONS):

a. The TPMP shall establish an objective review process for review and approval of requests for tuition assistance.

b. Requests for attendance at accredited courses in institutions of higher learning that meet the criteria for Categories 1, 2, 3, and 4 training under draft Order 3000.6C, Training, will be handled through normal training request procedures and will not be applicable under this Order.

c. Career Development (Category 5) requests for approved funding under the NTAP will be processed through the procedures described below:

(1) Employees participating in the National Tuition Assistance Program are encouraged to have a career plan; e.g. IDP, approved by the appropriate supervisor. Intended courses of study are to be identified in the career plan. Requests received from an employee who does not have a current career plan on file shall be considered a lower funding priority. A focused plan to attain specific goals is considered a higher funding priority. Educational opportunities are intended to build upon related knowledge, skills, and abilities, and are not intended to prepare individuals to make unrelated career changes.

(2) The TPMO shall consider each employee's request for tuition assistance on its own merit.

(3) Employees may apply for one or more courses each semester, trimester, or quarter to be covered under the NTAP subject to available funding. In order to be reimbursed for tuition and related course costs an application must be submitted and approved by the TPMO prior to enrollment in the course.

(4) Requests not approved by the TPMO will be returned, with explanation, to the employee through the supervisor.

7. EXCEPTIONS. In the event that approved classes are filled at the time of registration or cancelled by the institution, similar substitute courses may be approved by the TPMO.

8. COST EFFECTIVENESS. FAA employees are offered a wide variety of choices in taking similar course work at public or private institutions of higher learning. In order to have equity of funding in the NTAP, where public and private institutions are located within a reasonable commuting distance, the maximum reimbursement for similar course offerings shall be the lesser of the tuition costs. "Similar" is defined as having a general resemblance or likeness, not as identical. This course determination shall be made by the TPMO in the process of granting administrative approval. The TPMO has final approval authority.

9. REIMBURSEMENT CRITERIA.

a. The employee will be reimbursed for successful completion of course work, which has been approved in advance by the TPMO, based upon the criteria established in this Order.

b. Payment will normally be made by reimbursing the employee after successful completion of a pre-approved course. Procedures for payment will be specified by the servicing TPMO. Reimbursement will be certified by the TPMO for payment as follows:

(1) Official evidence is provided that the course was satisfactorily completed. Satisfactory completion of a course of instruction is defined as achieving a passing grade of "C" or better. If the course is offered on a pass/fail basis the employee must receive a pass designation. Under this program, no provision is made for audited courses.

(2) Courses incomplete for reasons other than agency initiated actions, such as relocation or change of work schedule, will not be reimbursed.

(3) Itemized expenses are submitted by the individual to the TPMO on Standard Form 1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business, and must be accompanied by original receipts. Reimbursable expenses are tuition, course-required textbooks, and laboratory fees. Fees for parking privileges, student activity cards, medical services, matriculation, graduation, or other non-course related fees or transportation expenses are not eligible for reimbursement and are the responsibility of the employee.


c. Tuition assistance is intended for course work only. Employees are not eligible for reimbursement for expenses if they challenge or petition educational courses for academic credit, i.e., take an examination for the course in lieu of attending class, College Level Examination Program (CLEP), etc.

10. GENERAL

a. Under the NTAP, the agency provides monetary assistance to the employee for approved courses. The employee's contribution under the NTAP is the use of non-duty time while pursuing course work.

b. Premium pay is not to be authorized to accommodate voluntary employee attendance at institutions of higher learning.

c. Procedures as outlined are established to provide consistent guidelines for equitable administration of this program throughout the agency.


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and Higher Education